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SUBJECT: COORDINATOR FOR ASSISTANCE TRANSITION HASLACH'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ISSAWI

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Deputy Prime Minister Rafi al Issawi described the Iraqi leadership as completely consumed with politics and very unlikely to move forward any significant legislation prior to January's elections. He suggested formally calling for meetings of the Strategic Framework Agreement Joint Coordinating Committee (JCCs) to force the Prime Minister's office to name a successor to Barham Saleh as Co-Chair of the Economic and Energy JCC. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On November 12, Coordinator for Assistance Transition Patricia Haslach, USAID Director and EMIN met Deputy Prime Minister Issawi to discuss follow up to the Dialogue on Economic Cooperation and press for Council of Representatives (CoR) passage of key economic legislation. Haslach asked if the GOI had found a replacement for Barham Saleh as chair of the Economic and Energy JCC of the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) and encouraged Issawi to energize the SFA working groups.

¶3. (SBU) Issawi said bluntly that the GOI leadership was completely preoccupied with politics at the expense of all else. He was pessimistic that any economic legislation would pass the CoR before elections. Regarding Saleh's role in the Economic and Energy JCC, Issawi complained that the Prime Minister's office was too busy to handle the job, but was unwilling to let anyone else do it. Issawi had suggested giving the job to National Investment Commission Chairman Dr. Sami al Araji, but the PM's office had refused.

¶4. (SBU) Issawi agreed that it was important to keep the SFA working groups active while the country's political leaders were consumed in the months ahead with campaigning and forming a government. He lamented that some around the PM see the SFA as a burden rather than a policy tool. He encouraged Haslach to write to the PM to call formally for meetings of the Economic/Energy and Services/IT JCCs. This, he hoped, would force the PM to name a replacement for Saleh.

¶5. (SBU) Haslach noted that Ambassador Hill and Finance Minister Jabr would sign within days a memorandum of understanding to confirm duty-free access for imports destined for U.S. assistance projects. She told the DPM that we may call on him, once that is signed, to encourage the appropriate officials to move quickly to release equipment currently stuck in Umm Qasr port that is destined for the Basrah Children's Hospital. (Issawi, a physician, is always attentive to health issues.)

¶6. (SBU) The USAID Director informed Issawi of a preliminary program with the Ministry of Health on H1N1 influenza. He explained that USAID's larger goals for the health sector would focus on a substantially larger program for primary health care, not big hospitals. Issawi agreed, arguing that past assistance had been too focused on secondary and tertiary health care.

HILL